VI. *Account of an extraordinary Dropſical Caſe. By Mr.* John Latham, *in a Letter to Mr.* Warner, *F. R. S.*

TO MR. WARNER.

SIR,

Dartford, October 28, 1778.

Read Dec. 17, 1778. WHEN I laſt had the pleaſure of ſeeing you, it was your opinion, that the Royal Society would receive ſome ſatisfaction in my giving ſome account of the caſe of Miſs A. M. who died lately of a dropſy under my care.

This patient was of a florid, lively conſtitution, but from a child was ſubject to a violent eruption, which came generally on a ſudden, covering the whole neck, breaſt, and often great part of the face; and after remaining a week or two abated in violence, and went off by degrees. The intervals were uncertain, but for the moſt part in ſpring and in autumn ſhe was more apt to have it, though frequently three or four times in the year. Various methods were tried to eradicate this com-

plaint without effect; nor did the appearance of the menſes, as we had ſome reaſon to hope, in the leaſt turn out in her favour. It will be needleſs to relate here the various medicines which had been given her with little or no ſucceſs, except that the moſt relief ſhe found was from the uſe of ſalt water, which was thought to make the intervals the longer in two or three inſtances, as well as the appearance of the eruption milder. Things continued thus till the autumn 1773, when the menſes became obſtructed, continuing ſo for ſome months, but appeared once more very plentifully; after which they never returned, neither did the eruption, except in the moſt trifling manner. About Chriſtmas 1773 ſhe complained of a weight in the abdomen, and fulneſs of the ſtomach; which ſymptoms were relieved by ſome gentle opening medicines. She then went on a viſit to ſome friends at a diſtance, after which I ſaw her no more for two months. I learned, that during that time the complaints had returned more violent, for which ſhe conſulted a phyſician on the ſpot, but without the relief ſhe found at firſt; for the abdomen began to increaſe in ſize every day, and became painful, the urine high-coloured, and in ſmall quantity, with thirſt, and every other ſymptom of an approaching dropſy.

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In a narrative of this kind it may be expected, that a detail of the medicines ſhe took during her illneſs might be noted; but as I chiefly acted in my ſurgical capacity, and as ſhe was after this time, till the firſt operation, for the moſt part in London, under the care of phyſicians of the firſt eminence, it is out of my power to give ſuch an account; ſuffice it then to ſay, that ſhe was obliged to ſubmit to the operation of the *paracenteſis* the 27th of June, 1774. The quantity I then took off was only twelve pints, ſomewhat fœtid, but not very dark coloured, nor was it ever after the leaſt offenſive. The operation was repeated in ſix weeks, when twenty-nine pints were taken off; after that time once in four weeks to the end of the year. During the whole of the year 1775 I tapped her once in a fortnight more or leſs; and in the year 1776 ſhe for the moſt part underwent the operation every eight or nine days, the intervals gradually ſhortening, till by the end of the year ſhe could go no longer than a week between, which continued to the day of her death, which happened May 14, 1778, being then not quite twenty-three years of age. About a week before that time, ſhe was troubled with inceſſant vomitings, which nothing would relieve; but was better a few hours before her death, and went off pretty eaſy.

I have good reaſon to ſuppoſe the complaint originated from a diſeaſe of the left ovary, for after the firſt tapping I felt a ſubſtance of the ſize of a cricket ball; and, as the operations went on, this became more and more manifeſt, increaſing ſo much as at laſt to occupy the whole ſpace of the *abdomen* forward, being of a very irregular form, and I am clear of many pounds weight, for ſhe appeared, even after the water had been drawn off, as large as a woman in the laſt month of pregnancy. It would have added greatly to my ſatisfaction to have been able to clear up this point in every particular, by opening her after death; but I had the extreme mortification of being denied this neceſſary circumſtance, notwithſtanding my moſt earneſt ſolicitations.

I muſt, therefore, content myſelf with giving this bare recital of facts as above, which will ſerve to record to futurity, a caſe which I believe has not its equal in regard to the number of operations. What is remarkable here is, that this young lady had a good appetite for the moſt part, and was very chearful; and, except a day before and after each operation, uſed to viſit her friends at ſeveral miles diſtance as ſhe would have done in health, and till within the laſt two or three months could walk a mile or two with tolerable eaſe.

As to the quantity of water taken off, I find it to amount, upon the neareſt calculation, to twenty-four pints at each operation; for though the firſt time produced only twelve pints, and in ſeveral of the latter operations the quantity fell ſhort of twenty-four pints, yet I may venture to ſtate it at leaſt at twenty-four pints or three gallons on an average, as in many of the operations I took off from twenty-eight to thirty pints. The number of times I tapped her was in all 155, which brings out in the whole 3720 pints, being 465 gallons, not far ſhort of ſeven hogſheads and an half. As to the authenticity of the whole, your connections with the family, and frequent opportunities of ſeeing this young lady during her illneſs, will put it beyond a doubt. I have therefore no more to add, than my wiſh that the caſe may prove acceptable to the Society.

I am, &c.